

Make-Overs Lead to Better First Impressions for Seaside Heights Businesses

*Hurricane Sandy NJ Relief Fund and UCEDC team up to help businesses
look their best for the summer season and beyond*

(Cranford, NJ) Twenty-seven Seaside Heights businesses, on and off the boardwalk, have received free retail design consultations and \$2,000 implementation grants thanks to the [Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund](#) (HSNJRF) and [UCEDC](#), a statewide nonprofit economic development corporation.

The **Seaside Heights First Impressions Program** was launched by UCEDC last May with financial support from the First Lady's Relief Fund, the HSNJRF, to help Seaside Heights businesses recover from Sandy and the Boardwalk fire. The program aims to give these small businesses and their owners the extra boost they need for a successful 2014 summer season.

"This historic Boardwalk holds a lot of special memories for families across New Jersey and the Relief Fund is extremely proud to take part in its recovery," said First Lady Mary Pat Christie, Chair of the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund. "The people of Seaside Heights are incredibly resilient -- they continue to get right back up and I'm thrilled that the First Impressions Program was able to give them a helping hand."



[First Impressions Video](#)

Each business received up to five hours of consultation with a retail designer and an easy to implement design plan; store layout, colors, signage, traffic flow and other elements of the retail experience were considered. Owners could decide for themselves how and when to use their \$2,000 grant. Improvements have included new paint colors, repaired/enhanced facades, signage/branding, and new display fixtures.



[Designer Nancy Zoraian consults with Mike Patel, owner of the Bay Breeze Motel](#)

"Working with the business owners in Seaside Heights has been a moving experience," said Maureen Tinen, UCEDC President. "Despite all they've been through, they remain completely committed to their businesses and their community. They've worked hard to bring Seaside back and they've enthusiastically embraced the First Impression Program as a way to make the business district even more vibrant and inviting."

"Nancy (Zorain, the First Impressions retail design consultant) gave me such great advice," says Cara Hershey, owner of Le Petite Garage, a women's clothing and jewelry boutique on Ocean Terrace. "She helped me change a few things in my shop that I would have never thought of myself."

Patty Hershey, owner of the Shake Shoppe on the boardwalk was eager to get a fresh perspective on her location. "Thanks to UCEDC, with Nancy's help and the grant, we've made some changes that make the arcade look terrific, better than ever!"

The partnership between the Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund and UCEDC extends far beyond the Seaside Heights First Impressions program. Support from the Relief Fund has allowed UCEDC to offer [2% working capital loans](#) and ongoing business mentoring to small businesses throughout the nine-county Sandy- affected region. Thus far, \$3.255 million in loans have been made to 115 small businesses in 87 communities. This infusion of working capital created/protected over 1,000 jobs and leveraged close to \$7 million in capital investments.

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About the [Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund](#)

The Hurricane Sandy New Jersey Relief Fund Inc. is a private independent charitable organization, not formed or controlled by the State of New Jersey or any of its agencies or offices. The Relief Fund is chaired by First Lady Mary Pat Christie and has raised \$40 million from over 33,000 donors worldwide. Nearly \$34 million has been distributed, to date, to more than 100 non-profit organizations focused on New Jersey's long-term recovery efforts. For more information, visit <http://www.sandynjrelieffund.org> or follow us on Twitter [@SandyNJRelief](#).

About [UCEDC](#)

UCEDC, a statewide nonprofit economic development corporation, is dedicated to promoting New Jersey's small businesses with resources tailored to every stage of business growth. Since its inception in 1977, UCEDC has provided over \$20 million in loans to start-up and established businesses through a variety of SBA programs and other funding sources. Its Procurement Technical Assistance Center has helped local businesses win over \$2 billion in awarded government contracts. And thousands of entrepreneurs have attended its workshops and seminars, giving them a strong foundation for success.